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Letter dated 8 March 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing in response to the letter dated 24 February 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations regarding the tragedy in Khojaly, circulated as a document of the General Assembly and the Security Council (A/59/713-S/2005/125). In a pattern that is as familiar as it is abhorrent, the Ambassador of Azerbaijan has once again engaged in disseminating fabricated and totally misleading information about the tragedy in Khojaly aimed only at concealing the truth and the policy of massacres of Armenians meticulously planned and carried out by its leadership from 1988 to 1990 in Sumgait, Kirovabad (Ganja) and Baku.

In an effort that has become the trademark of the Azerbaijani leadership and has been elevated to State policy, the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan puts forward distorted and groundless accusations against my country, conveniently forgetting that the events of those years were clearly documented through eyewitness testimonies, and the Azerbaijani ones among them (see annex).

As Armenia has stated on multiple occasions, and as I would like to reiterate here, the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia have never participated in the conflict in and around Nagorno Karabagh. Moreover, no armed forces of the newly independent Armenia could have participated at the events in Khojaly as those forces had not been formed yet in February of 1992.

As despicable as it may seem, and immoral as it may sound, the manipulation of the memory of the victims and the suffering of those who survived has become the main tool of the Azerbaijani machinery in a vain effort to disguise its ineptitude and unpreparedness to seriously negotiate a peace agreement that would end the conflict. As for the truth in Khojaly, it is clearly demonstrated in the accounts of Azerbaijanis covering the event and dealing with it. In an interview with the Czech journalist Jana Mazalova in March of 1992, the then President of Azerbaijan stated: "The massacres were staged".

With regard to the unsubstantiated allegation of "ethnic cleansing" against Armenia and Armenians, I would like to present only one example, which speaks

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for itself. According to the Soviet census of 1926, Khojaly was an entirely Armenian village with 888 inhabitants. In the 1960s, the first Azerbaijani inhabitants appeared in the Armenian Khojaly. In 1988, the last Armenians were brutally killed and driven out of Khojaly. According to the 1989 census, Khojaly was an entirely Azerbaijani village with 1,661 inhabitants. As stated by Arif Yunusov in *Tragediya Khodjaly* (The Tragedy of Khojaly) in *Zerkalo*, from 13 to 19 June 1992, Khojaly was the focus of a large Azerbaijani resettlement programme (Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden, Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, New York University Press, 2003, p. 170). The policy and ideology behind it was revealed by Heydar Aliyev, the late President of Azerbaijan, in his meeting with Azerbaijani journalists on 22 July 2002: "I was changing the demographic situation in Nagorno Karabagh".

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 163, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Armen **Martirosyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 8 March 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The truth about the events in Khojaly

Evidence from Azerbaijani sources

For already 13 years after the events in Khojaly, official Baku has been obstinately fanning anti-Armenian hysteria with the aim of falsifying the factual history and trying to put the blame for those tragic events on Armenians.

The events in Khojaly, which led to the deaths of civilians, were the result solely of political intrigues and power struggle in Azerbaijan.

The real reasons are most convincingly reflected in the accounts of Azerbaijanis themselves — as participants in and eyewitnesses of what happened — as well as of those who know the whole inside story of the events in Baku.

Khojaly, along with Shushi and Agdam, was one of the main strongholds from which Stepanakert, the capital of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic, was shelled continuously and mercilessly for the three winter months of 1991/92 with artillery, missiles and launchers used for targeting cities.

Knocking out the weapon emplacements in Khojaly and thus freeing the airport were the only way for the Nagorno Karabagh Republic to ensure the physical survival of its population condemned by Azerbaijan to complete annihilation. The daily shelling of Stepanakert from nearby Khojaly took the lives of hundreds of peaceful inhabitants — women, children and old people.

The then President of Azerbaijan, Ayaz Mutalibov, has stated that "the assault on Khojaly was not a surprise attack".[1] In an interview in 1992 with the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* he emphasized that "a corridor was kept open by the Armenians for people to leave".[2] However, a column of civilians was fired on by armed units of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan on the approaches to the Agdam district border, a fact later confirmed by Ayaz Mutalibov, who linked this criminal act to attempts by the opposition to remove him from power, and blamed it entirely for what happened. In his interview with the Russian magazine, *Novoye Vremya*, Mutalibov stated that "the shooting of the Khojaly residents was obviously organized by someone to take control in Azerbaijan".[3]

According to Azerbaijani journalist M. Safarogly, "Khojaly occupied an important strategic position. The loss of Khojaly was a political fiasco for Mutalibov".[4]

Furthermore, there is a statement by an Azerbaijani journalist, Arif Yunusov, which clearly states: "The town and its inhabitants were deliberately sacrificed for a political purpose — to prevent the Popular Front of Azerbaijan from coming to power".[5] In this case, though, the Azerbaijanis themselves are named as the perpetrators of the tragedy.

Similar comments and views concerning the events in Khojaly are known to have been made by several other highly placed Azerbaijani officials and journalists.

Tamerlan Karayev, at one time Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan, bears witness: "The tragedy was committed by the authorities of Azerbaijan", and specifically by "someone highly placed".[6]

The Czech journalist Jana Mazalova, who by an oversight of the Azerbaijanis was included in both of the groups of press representatives to be shown the bodies mutilated by "the Armenians", noted a substantial difference in the two cases. When she went to the scene immediately after the events, Mazalova did not see any traces of barbarous treatment of the bodies. Yet a couple of days later the journalists were shown disfigured bodies already "prepared" for taping.

Who killed the peaceful inhabitants of Khojaly and then mutilated their bodies, if the tragedy occurred not in a village taken by Armenians or on the route of the humanitarian corridor, but on the approaches to the town of Agdam — on territory fully controlled by the Azerbaijanis?

The independent Azerbaijani cameraman Chingiz Mustafaev, who took pictures on 28 February and 2 March 1992, had doubts about the official Azerbaijani version and began his own inquiry. The journalist's very first report to the Moscow news agency D-Press on the possible complicity of the Azerbaijani side in the crimes cost Mustafaev his life: he was killed not far from Agdam under circumstances that are still unexplained.

The former President of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, himself recognized that Azerbaijan's "former leadership were also guilty" of the events in Khojaly. Already in April 1992, according to the agency Bilik-Dunyasy, he had commented as follows: "The bloodshed will be to our advantage. We should not interfere in the course of events". To whose "advantage" was the bloodletting is clear to everyone. *Megapolis Express* wrote: "It cannot be denied that, if the Popular Front of Azerbaijan actually set far-reaching objectives, they have been achieved. Mutalibov has been compromised and overthrown, public opinion worldwide has been shaken, and the Azerbaijanis and their Turkish brethren have believed in the so-called genocide of the Azerbaijani people in Khojaly".[7]

One other tragic detail. It has become clear since the events that 47 Armenians were already being held hostage on 26 February in "peaceful" Khojaly, a fact that the Azerbaijani mass media "covering" the tragedy has failed to mention. After the liberation of Khojaly only 13 hostages (including 6 women and 1 child) were found there, the other 34 were taken away by the Azerbaijanis to an unknown location. The only thing known about them is that they were led from the village on the night of the operation, but never reached Agdam. There is still no information concerning what eventually happened to them or confirming that they continued to be held captive by the Azerbaijanis.

In the light of the above facts it may confidently be said that the killing of peaceful inhabitants of the village of Khojaly was the work of the Azerbaijani side, which committed this crime against its own people in the name of political intrigues and the struggle for power.

Notes

[1] *Ogonyok* (magazine), Nos. 14-15, 1992.

[2] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2 April 1992.

[3] *Novaye Vremya*, 6 March 2001.

[4] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 1993.

[5] *Zerkalo* (newspaper), July 1992.

[6] *Mikhalifat* (newspaper), 28 April 1992.

[7] *Megapolis Express*, No. 17, 1992.